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Funding social change since 1967

RESIST

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A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority

December 2000

Activists Call for Schools Not Jails!

Youth Demand Education as a Human Right

LUIS SANCHEZ

While no single episode made the Civil Rights Movement inevitable, the events of spring 1960 were undeniably historic. In February, young people in Greensboro, North Carolina began the student sit-in movement. In April, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was born at a student conference in Raleigh. This movement went on to replace Jim Crow segregation with at least the promise of civil rights and equal protection. Spearheaded by the vision and sustained by the dedication of teenagers and very young adults in the US South, this movement demanded that the United States honor the humanity of African Americans and reject the outrage of racial oppression.

Exactly 40 years later, in the spring of 2000, young people in California are part of a new civil rights movement. This new movement demanding "Schools Not Jails" and "Education as a Human Right" is insisting that over-funded prisons and over-armed police forces return public resources, equal protection, freedom and dignity to communities of color and poor people. Not only in California—but especially here, where the prison machine is running on overdrive—young people are forging a movement for human rights that will reverse the economic and political trade-off between prisons and schools.

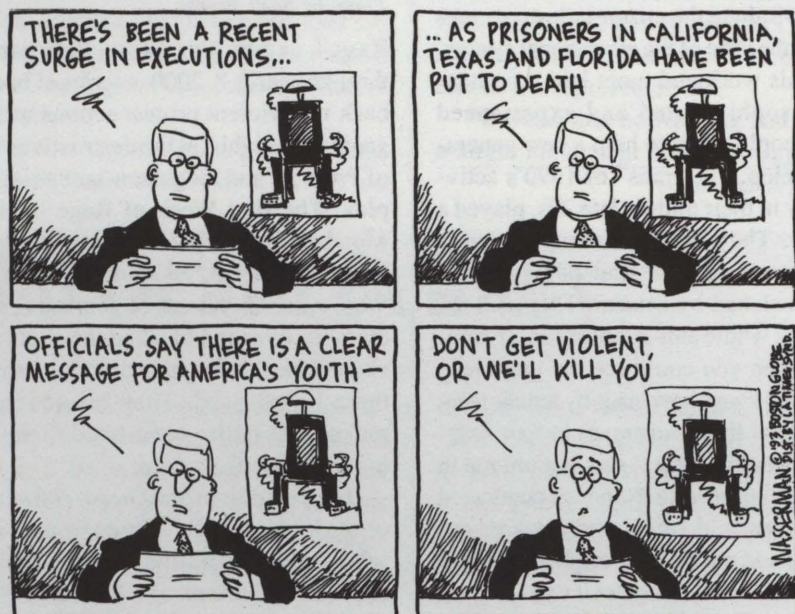
History

This new movement took years to develop. Some San Franciscan youths had been energized and politicized during the 1991 Gulf War. In 1993 primarily Latino youth were training and demonstrating all over northern California against racist policies and programs in schools, demanding La Raza Studies at the high school level, and other educational rights. The organization first known as Fund Our Youth Project, then StEP (Student Empowerment Program), VOS (Voices of Struggle), and currently Olin (the name means Movement in Nahuatl, an indigenous language of central Mexico) organized massive school walk-

outs involving 20,000 people over time in 1993-94. StEP played a central role in building the current movement and devised the "Schools Not Jails" slogan.

Major forces in developing the movement were the campaigns against a series of right-wing propositions, including: 184 (Three Strikes and You're Out), 187 (No Health and Education Rights for the Undocumented), 209 (No Affirmative Action), and 227 (No Bilingual Education). The Bay Area's Californians for Justice [also a Resist grantee] trained hundreds of young people in electoral work. Some youth fought to block a new curfew. Many

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worked in the campaign to free Mumia Abu Jamal and still more were energized by the Critical Resistance conference at UC Berkeley exposing the prison industrial complex.

By 1997, Raquel Jimenez of VOS could say "The high school students are running things now. They needed college students as mentors in the beginning but now they can run their own meetings." VOS's biggest effort drew more than 4,000 youth to the new police station in Concord for a dramatic protest demanding schools not jails. Young groups with several years of activist experience like Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement (STORM) attracted youth of color with their radical politics and street style, and set up study programs that included revolutionary theory. In Los Angeles and San Diego, Youth Organizing Communities (YOC) has been giving workshops and training youth since 1998 about the prison-industrial complex and the state of the educational system.

All this work and more laid a foundation of sophisticated and experienced young people ready to help a new generation develop. "Veterans" of 1990's activism, now in their mid-to-late 20s, played a key role. They included many dynamic young women, whose leadership was not to be squelched by sexism. This paid off during the whole anti-Proposition 21 campaign, when you could see the great leap in skills and know-how made by female teenagers. Third Eye Movement in San Francisco [a Resist grantee] was not unique in having its liaison with the police conducted by a 15-year-old (mentored by a young Chicana) and media relations handled by a 17-year-old. In Los Angeles it was 14-year-old Sommer Garza of YOC who handled the media for a major demonstration.

Weeks of Rage: Schools Not Jails

When Prop. 21 appeared, then, youth were ready to launch what many have called a new civil rights movement. Prop. 21 was called the "Juvenile Crime Initiative" but it could have been better called the "Youth Incarceration Measure." It included 43 pages of provisions that criminalize youth, increase penalties for minor crimes, lowers the age to be tried as an adult, builds more jails and takes away money from schools and youth-positive programs.

In late February, 2,000 youth and community organizers launched the "Weeks of



California's youth represent a new generation of activists. Here members of Californians for Justice relax after a 1996 demonstration at a Home Savings and Loan. Photo by Scott Braley

Rage" campaign. From February 21 through March 8, 2000, a series of back-to-back non-violent protest actions were organized to highlight the destructive effects of Prop. 21 and the prison-industrial complex. The first Week of Rage began on Monday, February 21. In Oakland, a hip-hop event called "It's Not a Battle, It's a War" stirred hundreds of youth. Then they marched over and blocked the street at the city jail, demanding that the adults arrested there be released. They created such a ruckus that police soon freed three, hoping to defuse the crowd.

The next day, in San Diego, 700 students organized by YOC core groups in 15 schools walked out and marched down the city's major artery. On Wednesday, students in six cities in the Los Angeles area participated in coordinated strikes. Some 300 marched six miles through downtown Whittier (Nixon's hometown) and rallied in front of the Hilton hotel. Hilton Hotels Corp. was one of the main funders of Prop. 21 and a frequent target of youth actions.

Youth actions exploded from Eureka, way up in northern California, to Santa Cruz and even Stockton (hardly a bastion of protest). On February 24 a march of 500 sponsored by the New Rada Left went from the Also-Pico Projects in East LA to the LA county jail in downtown LA, where they blocked the intersection.

On February 24, hundreds of youth held "Get on the Bus I-the Siege," an event or-

ganized by Getting' Down. Buses picked up middle and high school students and then they marched through downtown Oakland for protests at the city jail and

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county courthouse. Candlelight vigils also took place that day at city halls in over 12 cities, to remember imprisoned youth and for those who might be imprisoned under Prop. 21. There were non-stop meetings to plan local actions, precinct walking by Californians for Justice, movies, videos, exhibits and even a dance against Prop. 21 hosted by Asian Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership in Oakland.

In the last big pre-election action in northern California, youth and supporters—newly angered by news that Amaduo Diallo's police killers had been acquitted in New York—marched to a dilapidated building in the Mission District where youth were often transferred from juvenile detention. That night its dreary portable classrooms were transformed into a "Liberation School" with bright art and colorful signs naming the buildings for historical revolutionaries. Hundreds of youth and adults gathered in the courtyard for an all-night militant celebration.

In San Francisco, the day after Prop. 21 passed, 300 people gathered at San Francisco's Hilton Hotel—where else? La-

dies in mink coats looked startled as youth filled the gilt-chandeliered lobby, and stayed there. Police moved into that opulent setting and began arresting a total of 175 people. Their young faces took on a luminosity that combined defiance with dignity and said: ain't gonna let no jailhouse turn me around, turn me around.

Justice for Youth: End the Racist Setup

The fight against Prop. 21 politicized youth all over the state. Even though it passed, the energy and commitment of mobilized youth kept pumping into even bigger campaigns. In April YOC began training young people about globalization and its effects on education and the prison-industrial complex. During the summer YOC held two summer "edutainment" events featuring local punk and hip-hop performers, speakers, and other local acts titled "Levante" (Stand Up) in Rampart/Central Los Angeles and "Globalize This" in Whittier. In addition, YOC began to train youth in the high schools on non-violent direct action.

YOC also began to focus on the upcoming Democratic National Convention

(DNC) in Los Angeles. As the DNC neared, a coalition formed to protest racist and classist inequalities in education. The coalition included YOC, Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ), Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), University Coalition that included MEChAs and BSUs, and Bus Rider's Union (BRU). This coalition took on the name of "Justice for Youth: End the Racist Setup" and called on Democratic governor Gray Davis to adhere to the coalition's 10-point plan to change public education.

"As youth, I'm sick and tired of having to endure these horrible conditions in our public schools, where our classrooms are too crowded, we don't have any books and our teachers aren't paid enough," said 17-year-old Emilio Guerrero of Whittier YOC.

The coalition march to Governor Gray Davis' office was an overwhelming success as over 1,000 youth, community members, teachers, and supporters chanted outside his office and forced a meeting with one of his representatives.

"It was about networking and creating a larger movement that goes way beyond

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Juveniles and the Death Penalty

DEATH PENALTY INFORMATION CENTER

Seventeen men have been executed for crimes committed as juveniles since 1976. Jurisdictions with an age minimum of 18 for capital punishment: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York*, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington (by Court decision), and U.S. Other states have either no minimum age or a minimum under 18. (*NY's law only allows the death penalty for those "more than 18.")

Current Death Row Inmates under Juvenile Death Sentences

As of June 2000, 74 persons were on death row under death sentences received for juvenile crimes. These 74 condemned juveniles constituted about 2% of the total death row population of about 3,700. Although all were age 16 or 17 at the time of their crimes, their current ages range from

18 to 41. They have been under death sentences in 16 different states and on death row from a few months to over twenty-one years. Texas has by far the largest death row for juvenile offenders, now holding 26 (33%) of the national total of 74 juvenile offenders.

All 74 juvenile offenders on death row were male and had been convicted and sentenced to death for murder.

Three-quarters of these cases involved 17 year old offenders, and two-thirds of them were minority offenders. In contrast, 80% of the victims were adults. Two-thirds of the victims were white, and half were females. The paradigm case of the juvenile offender on death row is that of the 17 year-old African-American or Hispanic male whose victim is a white adult.

The total number of persons under death sentences has increased by 206% in the past fifteen years, reflecting a steady rise from 1,209 in 1983 to about 3,700 in June 2000. In contrast, the number of juve-

nile offenders under death sentences has risen more slowly, but still alarmingly: 33 juvenile offenders were under death sentences at the close of 1983, compared to 74 juvenile offenders today (a 124% increase), but this number has fluctuated back and forth between these two extremes during this decade.

This comparatively constant death row population for juvenile offenders results from the fact that the number of new death sentences each year is roughly equal to the combination of death sentence reversals plus executions for juvenile offenders.

This information is reprinted from the website of the Death Penalty Information Center (www.deathpenaltyinfo.org). Statistics are taken from The Juvenile Death Penalty Today: Death Sentences and Executions for Juvenile Crimes, January 1973-June 2000 by Victor L. Streib (<http://www.law.onu.edu/faculty/streib/juvdeath.htm>).

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of the DNC,” said Cecilia Brennan from Central LA YOC. “In Los Angeles, the majority of marchers were from the community. When people of color, the working class, immigrants, undocumented, and youth used to being attacked by cops are demonstrating against globalization and corporate capital, politicians and corporate interests, the police find this really scary.”

Where do we go from here?

After the Democratic National Convention, YOC and Olin took on a new campaign. Since 1993 both Olin and YOC have focused their energies on pressuring local school boards and sending messages through walk-outs and other actions to both local and state elected officials. Although these actions have energized the youth movement, many of the gains have only been concessions such as Ethnic Studies classes. The educational system remains in a permanent crisis, especially in

inner city schools where most people of color reside. California’s educational system is worse now than when the youth movement began. However, their power base has grown beyond everyone’s imagination. Young people are organizing in Chula Vista (a border town next to San Diego) and Oakland with basically the same vision.

Therefore, YOC and Olin think it is time to up the ante and demand educational justice in all classrooms. Although important, an Ethnic Studies class will only target a few students. Curriculum changes need to be made in all classes since all the curriculum is inherently racist, sexist, classist, and homophobic. Schools need to be places of critical learning and develop thinkers that are socially responsible. Too often the schools promote a narrow process of learning that limit’s young people’s minds. In order for schools to transform into what YOC and Olin envision schools to be, they need to target the decision-makers and hold them accountable. This new campaign will

target these policy makers while focusing on four of the largest school districts in the state: Los Angeles, Oakland, San Diego, and San Francisco Unified. They feel strongly that if these four districts are pressured constantly with key state officials, schools throughout the state will be transformed into places that promote educational justice, critical thinking, inclusion, and racial and economic equity.

“Often times, the voice of youth is oppressed and unheard. This time things are different. This time the youth will definitely be heard,” said Lester Garcia from East LA YOC.

Luis Sanchez is an organizer with Youth Organizing Communities. Portions of this article appeared in “The New Youth Movement in California” by Elizabeth Martinez (Z Magazine, May 2000). YOC received a grant from Resist this year. For more information, contact YOC, PO Box 1482, Montebello, CA 90640; www.schoolsnotjails.com.

Opposing Capital Punishment in SD

Faith-Based Opposition to the Death Penalty

JEANNE KOSTER

Presently, nearly every major religious denomination in the United States formally opposes the death penalty at the denominational level. In general, however, the denominational opposition has not translated to effective witness at the congregation level. Why is it that people in the congregations remain largely unfamiliar with the denominational statements or, if familiar, reluctant to accept them?

Partly this is because, except for the “peace” churches—such as Quaker, Mennonite, and Brethren—the denominations came to the point of formally opposing capital punishment relatively recently, most in the last quarter century. It is overly simple to plead that 25 years is too short a time to reverse centuries of tradition. The reasons for recalcitrance probably vary among the denominations.

Without solving that theoretical puzzle, members of the Interfaith Task Force Against the Death Penalty observed that their own congregations have had little meaningful exposure to the denominational opposition statements. The group con-



Dallas Chief Eagle offers a hoop dance as a prayer for peace at the Good Friday Vigil Against the Death Penalty in April, 2000. Photo courtesy of the Interfaith Task Force Against the Death Penalty

cluded that such exposure would help expose the fact that the majority of South Dakotans support the death penalty on the one hand while, on the other hand, are members of denominations that hold formal positions against its use. The Task Force works to increase grassroots questioning of the death penalty by familiarizing people with the anti-death penalty positions of their own churches.

The Task Force is now regarded as a credible source of information about the death penalty. State lawmakers have relied on the Task Force, as have citizens wishing to testify about death penalty-related proposals during the legislative session. The Task Force has assembled and distributed a resource packet of death penalty study and discussion materials, which highlights the re-

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Faith-Based Opposition to the Death Penalty

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ligious opposition to the death penalty. Thanks in part to funding from Resist, this resource has been radically revised and updated in a way that makes it more useful to congregations and groups within congregations.

Applying Justice Fairly

The Interfaith Task Force Against the Death Penalty works in the belief that the United States will ultimately reject government-sponsored judicial killing as a barbaric and essentially unjust practice, and that people of faith have a prophetic mission to help bring about that conversion. This mission is a way to witness for values which they share in their spiritual traditions.

Not long ago most churches, whether by moral tradition or by explicit confessional statements, largely accepted capital punishment as a just exercise of state power. However, as California death penalty opponent Paul Comiskey has pointed out, the acceptance was accorded with an implied conditionality—on the assumptions that the death penalty was needed for public safety and that it was applied justly (*Why Try to Get a Resolution Against the Death Penalty Passed by Your Parish?* by Paul Comiskey, 900 G Street, Suite 302, Sacramento, CA 95814). Modern social science methodology has enabled an empirical critique of these assumptions.

To their credit, many churches on the national level have respectfully considered the social science critique which revealed that the death penalty throughout the US is frequently applied unjustly and cannot be demonstrated to deter crime or otherwise advance public safety. They recognized, in other words, that the assumptions underlying their traditional acceptance of capital punishment were untenable.

From the Pew to the Penitentiary

Over the past three years, the Task Force has sponsored lectures, public discussions, prayer vigils, and testimony in the legislature about proposals relating to the death penalty—all pointing out denominational anti-death penalty positions. All Task



Activists march in front of the South Dakota Penitentiary during the first Good Friday Vigil in Sioux Falls in 1998. Photo courtesy of Interfaith Task force Against the Death Penalty

Force media notices emphasize the motive of increasing public awareness of denominational anti-death penalty positions.

The work has happened chiefly in Sioux Falls in southeastern South Dakota, where a larger population in an otherwise very sparsely populated state gives the best chance of accumulating a critical mass of support. News media are also concentrated there, as are the denominational judicatory offices, with which the Task Force seeks mutually supportive relations concerning the death penalty.

The Task Force makes an effort to hold planning meetings and sponsor events in a variety of congregations of denominations which oppose the death penalty. An exception has been the Good Friday Vigil Against the Death Penalty, held annually on the grounds of the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls. This year's Third Annual Good Friday Vigil drew about 85 participants for a prayer service and Declaration of Life signing ceremony. On the list of people who could not attend the vigil but who publicly endorsed were more than 30 clergy, including four judicatory heads of South Dakota denominations.

The Task Force has used the signing ceremony on other occasions and recommends it as an appropriate witness activity for congregations. The Declaration of Life is a formal, witnessed and notarized docu-

ment by which signers abjure the death penalty in case they themselves are murdered. Signers inform their families and file the document with their will or other important personal papers.

Some of the most beautiful elements in the prayer service were offerings by indigenous participants: traditional Lakota holy man Cecil Cross, who conducted a pipe ceremony as a call to worship; the Oyate Singers, who dignified the service with traditional song and drumming; and Lakota dancer Dallas Chief Eagle, who offered a hoop dance as a prayer for healing. The indigenous contribution witnessed impressively to their own spiritual tradition about the ideal response to murder, a response that seeks nonviolent restoration rather than violent retribution.

Media coverage of Task Force events has been generally excellent, a significant contribution to the multiple exposures needed to get folks used to the idea that the death penalty is "against their religion," building faith-based opposition to the death penalty to replace the traditional acceptance that churches formerly nurtured.

Jeanne Koster is an organizer for The South Dakota Peace & Justice Center, which received a grant from Resist this year. For more information, contact them at PO Box 405, Watertown, SD 57201.

Prison Activists Come of Age

In California, Resistance to Prison Expansion Builds on the Past

BELL GALE CHEVIGNY

“**T**his Goliath is so enormous that the Davids are flourishing,” says Ellen Barry, whose work with prisoners won her a MacArthur “genius” award, referring to California’s prison industrial complex. Promoting a book of prisoners’ writings from San Diego to Berkeley deepened my conviction that the nation’s contradictions over incarceration are sharpest there. California leads in numbers incarcerated, the clout of its prison guards’ union and the punitiveness of its ballot initiatives, but the Bay Area also leads in numbers and inventiveness of prison activist groups and coalitions. The Bay Area saw the spectacular rise in the sixties of a prisoners’ movement and its bitter splintering in the seventies, which drove away all but the die-hards. “Activists then,” Barry says, “attributed a false glamour to individual leaders inside, mostly poor men of color,” like George Jackson and the Black Panthers. When prison leaders ran afoul of the law, Barry says, “many in the movement felt disillusioned and threw out the baby with the bathwater.” Says Dorsey Nunn, another activist, “When the left backed away, the right filled the vacuum with the prison industrial complex.”

The growing crisis prompted Angela Davis and some 30 others to call a conference, “Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex,” in September 1998. Drawing an unexpected 3,500 old, young, sharply diverse and hitherto scattered participants, the event strengthened the networks fighting against prison expansion and for alternatives to incarceration. Seasoned organizers, knowing they are facing nearly insurmountable odds, now talk about a groundswell of opposition that has not yet crested, an incipient prison movement very different in range and sophistication from the old. Prison activists, predominantly women, are reaching out to embrace new groups—farmers, workers, the urban poor, victims, even baseball fans—and adapting economic, legal, dramatic and therapeutic approaches to think afresh about prisons, prisoners and community.

One of 10 children in an Irish Catholic family, Barry, now 46, saw some of her brothers suffer police brutality in Somerville, Massachusetts. Working in an NYU Law School clinic with women prisoners at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, she noted that they gave priority to their

cal director Dr. Anthony DiDomenico with many women’s accounts of having to submit to unwanted pelvic examinations in exchange for treatment. On camera, the doctor replied that the women liked the exams: “It’s the only male contact they get.” DiDomenico was reassigned to research,

Seasoned organizers, knowing they are facing nearly insurmountable odds, now talk about a groundswell of opposition that has not yet crested, an incipient prison movement very different in range and sophistication from the old.

children’s problems. In 1978 Barry founded Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC) in San Francisco. “I was committed to providing direct service, responding to needs identified by women prisoners themselves,” she says.

Organizations for women prisoners proliferated in the eighties, fueled by both the women’s movement and the exploding incarceration rate of women. When LSPC began, there were just over 1,000 women in state prisons; today there are more than 11,000, and according to Barry, at least as many in jail and three times that on probation and parole. Yet women’s prisons—including the world’s two biggest, in California—are built without regard to women’s gynecological and other health needs. In settling *Shumate v. Wilson* (a class action of women prisoners denied adequate healthcare, brought by LSPC and others), California’s Department of Corrections agreed to make improvements, but they have been minimal.

LSPC may have accomplished more by working with Ted Koppel and his crew to get into Valley State Prison for Women in Chowchilla for a six-part *Nightline* series last October. Koppel let the women speak at length about their circumstances, then questioned authorities. He confronted medi-

California’s women prisoners received much media attention and legislators began drafting bills against sexual abuse and for better medical care of incarcerated women.

After a client’s release, LSPC’s close work continues. Harriette Davis, imprisoned for killing her abusive husband, joined LSPC’s staff after her release, earned her RN degree and helped establish a leadership-training institute for the National Network for Women in Prison, which Barry co-chairs. The curriculum, developed by and offered to formerly incarcerated women, cultivates “an honest and respectful model of leadership,” Barry says; it helps women recover from various kinds of abuse while learning policy and advocacy skills.

LSPC’s holistic approach to prisoners and dedication to community education and activism changed the life of Dorsey Nunn, 47, one of the state’s most imaginative organizers of the African-American community. Drugs led to young Nunn’s conviction for felony murder in 1972 and a decade-long tour of California lockups during the waning years of the earlier prison movement, which he credits for his political education and determination to do something later for his community. “I found my

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whole Little League baseball team behind bars," he says, "except for one player!" Freed in the eighties, Nunn met Barry and other activists through his energetic paralegal work with men in San Quentin for the Prison Law Office. They turned out in force to testify for him in 1990 when he slipped back into drug use and was arrested. "There was nothing more painful," Nunn says, than to have disappointed so many good people. "I never want to be in that position again. Thank God for a moment of clarity. I recognized I had to change."

After completing drug treatment, Nunn began paralegal work with LSPC. As part of his job he returned to his hometown, East Palo Alto, then the "murder capital" of the United States, to develop with four "homeboys," including ex-convicts, a vigorous grassroots community drug-recovery program, Free at Last; later he added U-Turn, an innovative project for youth aged 16 to 24 on probation and parole. By 1998 the burgeoning project employed some 30 people and had gained funding from San Mateo County.

At the same time, Nunn sought to revive public interest in prison issues. In one largely white group after another, he met either indifference or fear; "burly and black," Nunn says, he looked like the prisoner of their nightmares. In this difficulty Nunn found his opportunity. "He has a way of putting issues that doesn't freak out people in the middle who might turn around," says Vincent Schiraldi, president of the Justice Policy Institute. "It's non-threatening and believable, authentic, deep." You're not "bumping up against ego with Dorsey," Schiraldi added, so Nunn can bring people into effective coalitions. When Propositions 184 ("three strikes and you're out") and 187 (depriving illegal immigrants of healthcare and education) generated separate struggles in 1994, Nunn says, "I tried to marry the issues. I'd tell folks it's the same monster—racism." Later he brought up convict labor with labor groups and challenged environmentalists to consider "what type of waste is 22 new prisons?"

Now program director for LSPC, Nunn is generating dialogue among those most affected by the prison crisis and least visible to policy-makers: California's black communities. To help them absorb information on the criminal justice system and

No one resisted [Proposition 21] more ardently than the targeted youth; "Schools Not Jails" is the rallying cry of young people of color who for years have protested budget priorities that make California first in prison spending and forty-first in education spending.

to move them past the pain and shame that separate them from their incarcerated young, Nunn has created a portable styrofoam "Healing Wall," modeled after the Vietnam War Memorial. In each community he collects names, photographs and stories of their missing persons: prisoners—often three or more generations of them—and people who were murdered or kidnapped. He posts these on the wall beside statistics on numbers of blacks killed, incarcerated, on parole and disfranchised. "Thirteen percent of African-American men can't vote because of felony convictions," Nunn exclaims. "That's a dramatic statistic, but we need African Americans saying so to our politicians and demanding community resources."

In East Palo Alto's Senior Center recently, Nunn raffled off 54 bikes "in the name of absent fathers," bikes repaired by San Quentin prisoners; to win one a child had to bring along a man. Ex-prisoners explained the materials on the wall, then Nunn began to address the large crowd, beginning by asking for a show of hands of those who had relatives in prison, would go to college, had seen their mothers battered, had relatives killed and expected to go to prison. At the last question, three children raised their hands. Nunn had his starting point for a rousing conversation about race and criminal justice.

Another ex-con advocate for prisoners, a 53-year-old assistant sheriff named Michael Marcum, is stirring unlikely dialogue among violent men through the Resolve to Stop the Violence Program. Founded with Marcum's advice by the unorthodox San Francisco County Sheriff Michael Hennessey, RSVP seeks offender accountability while reaching out to the victim and the community. It is a classic "restorative justice" project, though

groundbreaking in its application to violent offenders.

Marcum's own evolution is a restorative-justice parable. At 18, he killed his abusive father in Oakland and turned himself in, fully expecting to go to the gas chamber. But prison conditions shocked him into wanting to survive to change them. He helped organize the interracial United Prisoners' Union, which petitioned to get California's "civil death" statute (which deprives prisoners of all their rights) revoked in 1969, though most of its attributes have since returned. Free and working for Hennessey on rehabilitation programs, Marcum rethought prisoners' needs. "At first I pushed political education—we had to find our dignity before talking about accountability," he says. "But seeing people coming out, failing, going back, seeing some brothers hurting their women, my priority became making prisoners accountable and helping them to survive outside."

A mid-nineties encounter with Jean O'Hara, whose daughter and grandson were murdered, pushed Marcum's thinking further. "We on the left had written off the victims' rights movement as a pawn of the right and three-strikes politicians. It was humbling to hear Jean say she could only deal with her loss by feeling that it contributed to change, so she was going into prisons to tell her story." At the same time, in learning about restorative justice, Sunny Schwartz, the county jails' program administrator, realized that it was "not practical or ethical" to help offenders "without giving the victim voice and helping with restoration."

"The sheriff lets us think outside the box," Schwartz says, so she and Marcum consulted for 18 months with "former gang members, victims, Buddhists, Orthodox rab-

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bis, feminists, former homophobes, people for and against the death penalty,” to develop the uniquely holistic RSVP. Offering therapy and social services to violence victims and their families, it assigns men charged with violent crimes (except first-degree murder) to a 62-bed open dorm in County Jail #8 in San Bruno to participate all day, six days a week, in RSVP before or after sentencing. Roughly half have committed domestic violence; the others, crimes that might have earned them sentences of up to 25 years. The average jail stay is three to six months. On top of constant education, drug-treatment and job-counseling sessions, every Wednesday the men listen to victims. “It empowers the women to look perpetrators in the eye and tell their stories,” says Schwartz, “and it builds empathy among the offenders.”

RSVP devotes Mondays and Thursdays to *manalive* (“men allied nationally against living in violent environments”), a therapeutic program for violent men developed by Hamish Sinclair as a complement to the battered women’s shelter movement. In County Jail #7, I watched circles of men reenact and analyze moments in their lives when their “male-role belief system,” or conviction of male superiority, was threatened, tempting them to reassert it by making someone else inferior through physical or verbal violence. Veterans in the program helped newcomers see nuances of violence in acts like refusal to hear out another person. They practiced techniques of communication that would build equal relationships. Last winter RSVP graduates and former victims performed *Uncommon Ground*, a play based on their stories, to packed theaters.

In his book *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic*, Harvard’s Dr. James Gilligan theorizes, like Sinclair, that the “patriarchal code of honor and shame generates and obligates male violence.” Because punishing violence, Gilligan argues, not only fails to stop it but is based on the same patriarchal code, the keepers are as trapped as the kept. In Jail #8, the initial hostility to RSVP by officers assigned to the dorm is eroding. “It’s emotional physics,” says Schwartz. “They report that they experience a better quality of life on and off duty. Instead of yelling all day, many end up helping to refine the program—it’s redefining the law enforcement role.” Con-

ducting an assessment of the nearly three-year-old program, Gilligan is collecting recidivism data; he already knows that in 1998 there were six fights per week between prisoners and 83 cases of prisoner-to-staff violence in a nonprogram dorm, and no incidents of either kind in the RSVP dorm. “They’re demonstrating that violent people are more amenable to growth than people imagine,” he says. He and Marcum hope that the project will lead to the replacement of many prison cells with community-based corrections.

The San Francisco Giants are the cause’s improbable champions. At the second annual “Stop the Violence Day” game this

past September, 45,000 fans were given community resource packets about handling violence, and the Jumbotron flashed images of battering with the message: violence is learned—it can be unlearned.

While RSVP aims to reduce incarceration from within, other activists seek to check the state’s building boom, responsible for 22 new prisons in the past 15 years. This means taking on the California Correctional Peace Officers’ Association, the state’s most powerful union, as well as the California Department of Corrections.

Ruthie Gilmore, now 50, an African-American professor of geography at the

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Death Penalty is A Form of Political Oppression

STEVEN HAWKINS

Nat Turner . . . John Brown . . . Sacco and Vanzetti . . . Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. These are but a few individuals who have had their lives taken at the hands of the State. Their deaths underscore the fact that the death penalty is not a tool of the criminal justice system, but rather an instrument of the political system. The death penalty exists as a tool of oppression, selectively used against those individuals who resist the system, or who become the sacrificial lambs for some political agenda.

Today, almost 3,700 men, women and children await execution across the country. More than half are people of color. None are wealthy. Many are sitting on death row not because they committed the worst crimes, but because they had the worst legal representation. For example, Attorney Joe Cannon slept through his client Calvin Burdine’s capital trial. No matter—the courts recently found that his sleeping had no impact on his client getting a death sentence.

The public mood toward capital punishment is changing. After the release of more than 85 innocent people, the public has become increasingly aware of how the death penalty operates in practice. The media are now paying more attention to these cases, as well as covering in great depth the prosecutorial misconduct found in many capital cases. As a result, we have seen public support for the death penalty drop to a 19-year low. National polls now

show that a majority of Americans support imprisonment over capital punishment.

We have also seen the growth of a death penalty moratorium movement. It was sparked by Governor George H. Ryan of Illinois, who imposed a moratorium on executions in that state. Since then the moratorium movement has grown nationwide. Over 35 city and county governments have now passed resolutions calling for a halt to executions—from Atlanta to Charlotte, from Philadelphia to San Francisco.

Undoubtedly, there is still much work to be done before we can declare an end to the death penalty. But at no point in the last 25 years has there been such an opportunity for change. The end of capital punishment will not come through the legal apparatus—the heyday of the courts caring about who lives and who dies has long passed. This battle will have to be won in the political arena. It will require those of us who oppose the death penalty to mount campaigns for moratoria and repeals. And it will come from the grassroots. The people are ready for change. In their questioning and concerns about how capital punishment is administered, the people are getting in front of the politicians in Washington who still refuse to believe there is a problem. It is up to us to seize this moment and to organize a base of opposition that will speed the day when the death penalty is no more.

Steven Hawkins co-directs the National Campaign Against the Death Penalty in Washington, DC.

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University of California, Berkeley, was catapulted into thinking about the politics of race, crime and prison in 1969, when, she says, "my cousin was murdered and his wife subsequently arrested in the context of the FBI Cointelpro war against the Black Panthers." Gilmore's research led her to challenge the conventional wisdom that economically depressed areas can't resist prison-produced benefits. Her study of the town of Corcoran, where two new prisons were built between 1988 and 1998, demonstrated that the population below the poverty level nearly doubled while the town barely grew.

What Good Is a Prison?, a brochure produced by the California Prison Moratorium Project (CPMP), co-founded by Gilmore, contrasts Corrections Department promises of local prosperity with facts like these: More than 60 percent of the new prison jobs, including all the best-paying jobs, go to outsiders, most of whom end up living outside the prison town; most local businesses don't benefit, many suffer and some collapse; only those selling land for the prison profit. For others, the anticipated increase in land values drives up rents, which stay high even when benefits don't materialize.

Reaching out to California's Central Valley, where most of the new prisons are concentrated on formerly agricultural lands, CPMP discovered grassroots opposition in places like Tehachapi, Wasco and Ridgecrest. "They're asking larger questions," Gilmore says, "such as, Why is there an endless supply of prisoners?" In Tulare County, Stop This Outrageous Prison (STOP) has beaten back five prisons over the past 10 years. In Farmersville recently CPMP put United Farm Workers citrus workers in contact with STOP; together they defeated the City Council's prison proposal. Gilmore emphasizes the importance of forging coalitions within rural areas and across urban/rural divides. In California, Gilmore says, "the country and the city are demographically quite similar." In January rural and urban activists met at Berkeley to consolidate their common concerns.

Gilmore also initiated the Freedom Winter coalition, which fought Proposition 21, the juvenile crime initiative that passed on March 7. No one resisted it more ardently than the targeted youth; "Schools Not Jails" is the rallying cry of young people of color

who for years have protested budget priorities that make California first in prison spending and forty-first in education spending. They drew media attention by confronting the corporations that funded Proposition 21. This grassroots struggle has taught them organizational skills and strategies that will serve them in what organizers like Robin Templeton are likening to a revived civil rights movement. As California is the Mississippi of the prison industrial complex, it is here, she observes, that change must begin.

California's Goliath has set a terrifying standard for the rest of the country: prison construction is booming, violence behind bars raging and youth facing harsher sentences, while the incarceration rate of women and people of color is disproportionately high. In early July, however, California Corrections reported a small drop in the prison population for the first time in

more than 20 years. This first decline in the country reflects in part the influence of activists like the Bay Area Davids. But this is only a beginning. Ex-prisoner advocates must continue opening minds. RSVP is attracting queries nationwide. Dorsey Nunn will carry his Healing Wall to Southern California. LSPC is helping engage international human rights interest in US women prisoners. The Prison Moratorium Project is developing new California contacts, and Colorado has opened a branch. Everywhere, new attention to the impact on communities and the future of children is drawing people into new alliances, fertile coalitions. The struggle is uphill and long, but there is simply no alternative.

Bell Gale Chevigny is a Resist Board of Advisors member. This article is reprinted with permission from the July 24, 2000 issue of The Nation.

Resources on Death Penalty Activism

Below is a partial list of organizations that provide information and resources related to death penalty activism. Those denoted with an "" are Resist grantees.*

ACLU Death Penalty Campaign

125 Broad Street
New York, NY 10004-2400
www.aclu.org/death-penalty

American Friends Service Committee - Religious Organizing Against the Death Penalty Program

1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
www.deathpenaltyreligious.org

Amnesty International Program to Abolish the Death Penalty

600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20003
www.amnestyusa.org/abolish

Campaign to End the Death Penalty*

PO Box 25730
Chicago, IL 60625

Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

PMB 297177
Tequesta, FL 33469
www.cuadp.org

Coalition for Prisoners Rights*

PO Box 1911
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Critical Resistance*

2420 24th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

Death Penalty Information Center

1320 18th Street NW 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
www.deathpenaltyinfo.org

Journey of Hope

PO Box 210390
Anchorage, AK 99521
www.journeyofhope.org

Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation

2161 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02140
www.mvfr.org

National Coalition Against the Death Penalty

436 U Street, NW
Suite 104
Washington, DC 20009
www.ncadp.org

We Want A Moratorium!

Death Penalty Takes Center Stage

ALICE KIM

On June 22, 2000, the state of Texas executed Gary Graham, almost certainly an innocent man. Given Texas' bloody death penalty record, Graham, who changed his name to Shaka Sankofa, was almost certainly not the only innocent victim ever executed. And he was definitely not the only Texas death row inmate who never got a fair trial.

Yet despite overwhelming evidence of Shaka's innocence, Texas Gov. George W. Bush insisted that justice was being done—and repeated that he was confident that no innocent person had been executed on his watch.

Millions of Americans aren't so confident, which is why Shaka's execution shocked the country.

As the execution approached, thousands took part in protests around the nation. On June 19, the Campaign's day of action for Shaka, 200 protesters marched to the governor's mansion in Austin, Texas. During his fundraising swing through California for his presidential campaign, Bush's motorcade was greeted by dozens of protesters chanting, "Stop the Execution of Gary Graham!" And on June 22, 3,000 protesters from Texas and around the country converged on the prison in Huntsville, Texas, where Shaka's execution was scheduled to take place.

Shaka's execution made the death penalty a nationwide, front-page issue. And given the increasing questions about the guilt of scores of death row inmates, politicians who support the death penalty are running for cover. Even Bush, the governor of death, was forced to grant his first-ever reprieve to death row inmate Ricky McGinn within minutes of McGinn's sched-

uled execution in early June. Bush probably chose McGinn with the expectation that DNA evidence wouldn't clear him.

death row inmates, Caruthers Alexander and Henry Watkins Skinner, have been granted DNA testing. Northwestern Uni-

versity professor David Protesch and his students are currently investigating Skinner's case. Protesch said that Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism would pay for the DNA tests "if the state of Texas is too cheap to determine whether an innocent man is on their death row." Soon after Protesch's public statement, Gray County District Attorney John Mannon agreed to the DNA tests.

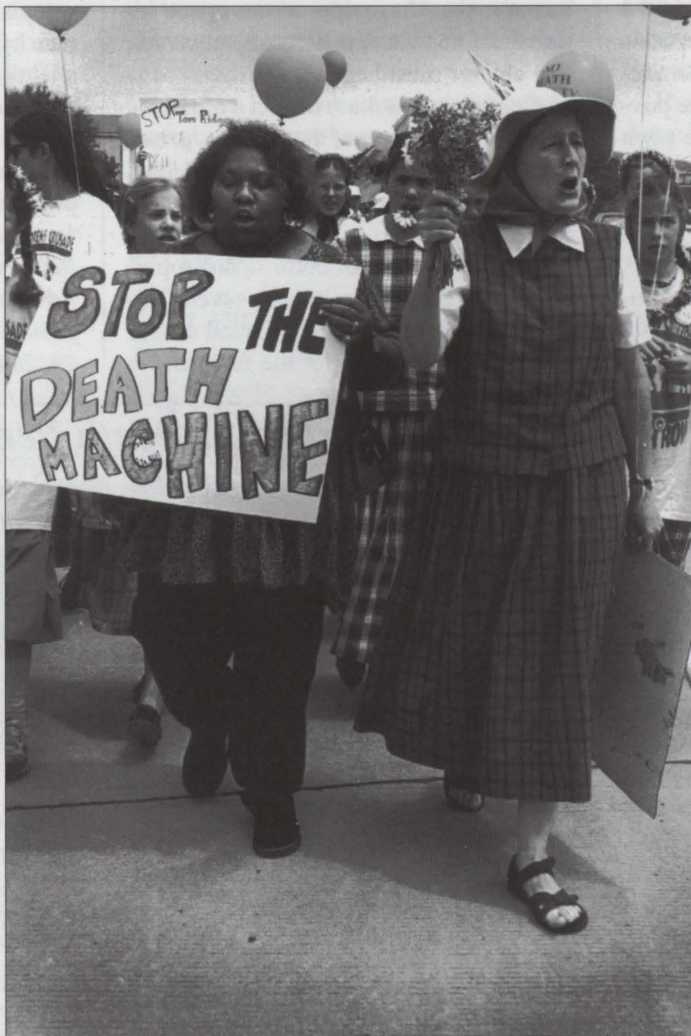
The truth is that both Governor Bush and his opponent in the presidential election, Vice President Al Gore, would have liked nothing better than to avoid any further discussion of the death penalty. But the issue isn't going away.

Anti-death penalty activists are dogging Bush wherever he makes an appearance. On July 31, the Campaign joined with thousands of others to protest the Republican National Convention. And Gore must not be allowed to rest either. In August, Campaign activists protested at the Democratic National Convention.

A national moratorium on executions is the next step in our struggle. If a national moratorium were currently in place, Shaka Sankofa would be alive today. Now is the time to build on the growing momentum against

the death penalty.

This article is reprinted from The New Abolitionist (September 2000, Issue 16), published by the Campaign to End the Death Penalty. The Campaign received a grant from Resist this year. For more information, contact them at CEDP, PO Box 25730, Chicago, IL 60625; www.nodeathpenalty.org.



Members of the Pennsylvania Abolitionists United Against the Death Penalty demonstrate in Philadelphia in 1998. Photo courtesy of the Pennsylvania Abolitionists United Against the Death Penalty, PO Box 58128, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Results from initial DNA tests conducted by the FBI are said to point to McGinn or a relative as the killer. Undoubtedly, death penalty supporters will attempt to use these results to bolster their case. But even if the results are definitive, they don't change the fact that the Texas death penalty system is plagued with racism and injustice.

Since Shaka's execution, two more Texas

Can You Pass the Death Penalty Quiz?

The following quiz was developed by the Death Penalty Information Center (www.deathpenaltyinfo.org).

1. The death penalty saves taxpayers money because it is cheaper to execute someone than to keep them in prison for the rest of their life. True / False

2. Since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976, more black people have been executed than white people. True / False

3. After the Supreme Court allowed the death penalty to resume in 1976, the first person to be executed was Gary Gilmore in Utah by a firing squad. True / False

4. Since the death penalty was reinstated in the U.S., between 5 and 10 people have been released from death row because they were innocent. True / False

5. In most states with the death penalty, you could be executed even if you suffer from mental retardation. True / False

6. If you commit a crime in certain states like Massachusetts or Wisconsin, you cannot receive the death penalty. True / False

7. Hanging has not been used as a method of execution in the United States for over 30 years. True / False

8. When the police chiefs of the U.S. were polled on their views about ways to lower the crime rate, only 1% named the death penalty as their top priority in reducing violent crime. True / False

9. No woman has been executed in the U.S. for over 25 years. True / False

10. The Supreme Court has said that defendants who were 16 or 17-years-old at the time of their crime can receive the death penalty. True / False

Answers

A.1. (False) Although the costs of incarceration are expensive (about \$20,000 per year per inmate), that amounts to \$600,000 to \$800,000 depending on whether a person lives 30 or 40 years after their sentence.

ing. The death penalty, on the other hand, costs about \$2 million per execution.

A.2 (False) Through the end of July, 2000, 363 white people have been executed and 233 black people. However, blacks constitute only about 11% of the U.S. population, so their execution rate is much higher than the rate of whites being executed. Racism in the use of the death penalty is shown when one looks at the race of the victims in the underlying crime which resulted in sending the inmate to death row. You are much more likely to receive the death penalty if the person you murder is white than if the person you murdered is black.

A.3 (True) Gilmore refused to appeal his conviction or sentence and was executed only three months after his trial. Another person was executed by firing squad in 1996, also in Utah. Like Gilmore, John Taylor waived his appeal and asked to be shot.

A.4 (False) There have now been over 80 people released from death row with substantial evidence of their innocence. Thus, for every 7 executions carried out, we have been finding another person on death row who is innocent.

A.5. (True) Thirty-eight states have the death penalty, but only 13 forbid the death penalty for those with mental retardation.

A.6 (False) The statement is false because no matter what state you commit a crime in you could still receive the federal death penalty, providing you have broken one of the laws for which that federal penalty applies. For example, certain acts of kidnapping in which a death occurs could merit the death penalty, regardless in which state the crime occurs.

A.7 (False) Delaware hanged one man in 1996 and the state of Washington has conducted 2 hangings in the 1990s.

A.8 (True) According to a Peter Hart Research Poll conducted in 1995 of police chiefs around the country, the chiefs named such measures as reducing drug abuse, better economy, and controlling guns as

more important than the death penalty in reducing violent crime. The poll also found that the majority of police chiefs do not believe that the death penalty is an effective law enforcement tool.

A.9 (False) Velma Barfield was executed by lethal injection in North Carolina in 1984, Karla Faye Tucker was executed in Texas in 1998, Judy Buenano was executed in Florida in 1998, Betty Lou Beets was executed in Texas in 2000, and Christina Rigges was executed in Arkansas in 2000. There are about 55 other women on death row today awaiting execution.

A.10 (True) Some states, however, forbid the death penalty for anyone under 18 years of age.

Death Penalty by the Numbers - 1999

Executions in 1999	98*
Executions since death	598
penalty was reinstated in 1976	
Death row population	3,625
Freed from death row	84
and exonerated in 1999	
Commutations	5
Leading execution states in 1999	
Texas	35
Virginia	14
Leading death row states	
California	551
Texas	458
Percent of total executions by region	
since 1976	
South	80%
Midwest	11%
West	8%
Northeast	0.5%

* As of December 17, 1999, with no more executions scheduled. This was the most executions in a single year since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. Statistics from the *The Death Penalty in 1999: Year End Report* by Death Penalty Information Center, www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/yrendrpt99.html.

GRANTS

Resist awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in activism for social, economic gender and racial justice and peace. Occasionally we highlight the progress of a recent grantee that has been extraordinarily successful. For more information, contact them at the address below.

Prison Moratorium Project

c/o DSA, 180 Varick Street, 12th Floor,
New York, NY 10014

The Prison Moratorium Project is one of this years most successful Resist grantees, having succeeded in challenging and changing the investment policy of the largest catering company in the world, Sodexho Marriot Services.

The story started in 1995, when a group of student activists met with former prisoners to discuss the harmful impact of the uncontrolled prison expansion on youth, on communities and on public institutions. The problems identified were the loss of public funds for education and social services, the exacerbation of racism, the erosion of civil liberties and the criminalization of youth—all negative consequences of over-incarceration and the unimpeded

growth of the prison-industrial complex.

The Prison Moratorium Project was formed and staffed almost entirely by volunteers, developed innovative programs to challenge the *status quo* in the areas of criminal justice education and reform. These programs included: **Education Not Incarceration** which helped students at New York's under-funded city and state university systems make the connection between ballooning corrections budgets and declining support for public higher education; **No More Prisons**, which used Hip Hop music to reach "at risk" youth and released a "No More Prisons" hip hop compilation CD in March of this year; **Teach Justice!**, which links activists and educators to develop programs to educate high-school age urban youth about the criminal justice system.

In March of this year the Prison Moratorium Project received a \$2,000 grant from Resist which, together with funding from other foundations, formed the financial basis for their latest campaign, **Not With Our Money: Students Stop Prisons-for-Profit**. This campaign focused on Sodexho Alliance, which is one of the largest recipients of student dollars in North America through its US

food services business, Sodexho Marriott Services. Sodexho Alliance held investments in the Corrections Corporation of America, and it was those investments that became the target of the Prison Moratorium Project.

April 4th became the first national day of action against Sodexho Marriot Services with symbolic boycotts on ten college campuses. This led to the resignation of Corrections Corporation of America founder "Doc" Crants from the Sodexho Marriot Alliance Board of directors.

In June, the campaign received news of its first campus victory when a coalition of sweatshop, labor and anti-prison activists had Sodexho Marriott Services removed from the State University of New York at Albany campus. The Albany victory was followed, in August, by a victory at Evergreen State College, where students kept Sodexho off campus by threatening a massive boycott. The number of schools active in the **Not With Our Money** campaign had reached 30 by the summer.

By early September there were two more victories, at Maryland's Goucher College and at Virginia's James Madison University and the active campuses had grown to 40, including two in Canada. Sodexho, clearly worried about the campaign, ran full-page articles in student newspapers advertising the company's hunger programs.

It was, however, October that brought the most exciting news in the form of a statement on the Sodexho Marriot web page (www.sodexhomarriott.com). Under "A Response to Our Clients Regarding PMP Issue" was a promise from Pierre Bellon, the Sodexho Marriott Chairman, that the company would divest from the Corrections Corporation of America in the near future.

While no precise time line was given nor was there any mention of the company's recent acquisition of British and Australian private prison companies, nevertheless the statement represents a victory for the student activists of the Prison Moratorium Project.

Join the Resist Pledge Program

We'd like you to consider becoming a Resist Pledge.

Pledges account for over 30% of our income.

By becoming a pledge, you help guarantee Resist a fixed and dependable source of income on which we can build our grant-making program. In return, we will send you a monthly pledge letter and reminder along with your newsletter. We will keep you up-to-date on the groups we have funded and the other work being done at Resist.

So take the plunge and become a Resist Pledge! We count on you, and the groups we fund count on us.

Yes! I'll become a RESIST Pledge.

I'll send you my pledge of \$ _____
every month/two months/
quarter/six months (circle one).

[] Enclosed is an initial pledge contribution of \$ _____.

[] I can't join the pledge program now, but here's a contribution of \$ _____ to support your work.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Donations to Resist are tax-deductible.

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